

**Notice of Allowability**

Application No.

09/882,457

Applicant(s)

BLINK ET AL.

Examiner

Art Unit

Joseph A. Fischetti

3627

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to Response dated 5/9/05.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 8,10,11,14 and 16-19.
3. ☒ The drawings filed on 14 June 2001 are accepted by the Examiner.
4. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
  - a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some\* c) ☐ None of the:
    1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
    2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
    3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* Certified copies not received: \_\_\_\_\_.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

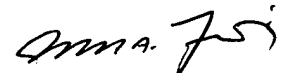
**THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.**

5. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
6. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
  - (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
    - 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.

Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
7. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

**Attachment(s)**

1. ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☒ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. ☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
7. ☒ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_



Joseph A. Fischetti  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit: 3627

### EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Atty. Smith on 5/17/05.

This listing of claims replaces all earlier versions and listings of claims in the application.

1-7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) A system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer regarding a level of customer satisfaction, said system comprising:

a plurality of tip trays ~~that obtain and store~~, each of said tip trays having means for obtaining and storing customer responses regarding the level of customer satisfaction; and

a base unit ~~that collects~~ having means for collecting the responses from the tip trays when the trays are stacked on the base unit, said base unit including a battery recharger connected to a power pin;

wherein each of the tip trays includes:

~~means within the tray for obtaining and storing responses from the customer regarding the level of customer satisfaction;~~

means for reporting the stored responses, said reporting means including a data receptacle that aligns with a data pin on the base unit when the tray is the bottommost tray in the stack of trays, and that aligns with a data pin on a lower tray

stacked directly under the tray when the tray is not the bottommost tray in the stack of trays;

a transmitter connected to said obtaining and storing means selectively generating a signal in response to the obtaining and storing means obtaining a particularly good or bad response by a customer;

a rechargeable battery connected to a power receptacle aligned with the power pin of the base unit; and

a power pin that aligns with a power receptacle on a higher tray stacked directly on top of the tray when the tray is not the topmost tray in the stack of trays;

wherein, when all of the trays are stacked on the base unit such that the data pins and data receptacles, and the power pins and power receptacles are in contact, the base unit collectively downloads customer responses from all of the stacked trays, and the recharger in the base unit recharges the batteries in all of the stacked trays simultaneously.

9. (Canceled)

<sup>2</sup>  
10. (Previously Presented) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim <sup>8</sup> wherein the means within each of the trays for obtaining and storing responses from the customer includes:

a visual display that presents customer satisfaction survey questions to the customer;

a survey keypad for entering the customer's responses to the survey questions;

a memory that stores the customer responses; and

a tray processor that sends survey questions to the display, collects responses from the keypad, and sends the responses to the memory.

<sup>3</sup>  
11. (Original) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim <sup>10</sup> further comprising an external communications link in communication with

the tray processor, said tray processor retrieving the responses from the memory and downloading the responses to the base unit utilizing the communications link.

12-13. (Canceled)

<sup>4</sup> 14. (Currently Amended) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim ~~8~~ wherein the base unit collecting means also includes a base unit processor connected to the data pin, said base unit processor using the data pin to program the tray processor with survey questions, and to download the customer responses from the tray.

15. (Canceled)

<sup>5</sup> 16. (Previously Presented) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim ~~8~~ further comprising an analysis unit remotely located from the base unit, wherein the base unit includes a communications port through which the collected responses are communicated to the analysis unit.

<sup>6</sup> 17. (Previously Presented) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim ~~16~~ wherein the analysis unit is resident on a personal computer (PC), and the communications port comprises an RS232 interface.

<sup>7</sup> 18. (Previously Presented) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim ~~17~~ wherein the analysis unit is resident on a remote computer, and the communications port communicates with the remote computer over a global computer network.

<sup>8</sup> 19. (Previously Presented) The system for obtaining and storing responses from a customer of claim ~~18~~ further comprising a plurality of base units connected in

series to a smart base unit, said smart base unit being the base unit that is connected to the analysis unit.

20-24. (Canceled)

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Claim 8 is the only independent claim of this application covers a plurality of tip trays each having means for obtaining and storing customer responses regarding the level of customer satisfaction and a base unit having means for collecting the responses from the tip trays and a battery recharger connected to a power pin for recharging the tip trays. The prior art fails to disclose or suggest the tip trays having means which causes them to be stacked on the base unit so that they can be both charged and downloaded through stacked engagement with one another such that only one tray need be the base unit. The stacked arrangement is accomplished by each tray having a rechargeable battery connected to a power receptacle aligned with a power pin of the base unit, and the power pin aligns with a power receptacle on a higher tray stacked directly on top of the tray when the tray is not the topmost tray in the stack of trays. In addition, downloading of the commentary data occurs in much the same fashion, that is, the base unit has a data pin and each tip tray has a data receptacle that aligns with a data pin on the base unit when the tray is the bottommost tray in the stack of trays, and that aligns with a data pin on a lower tray stacked directly under the tray when the tray is not the bottommost tray in the stack of trays. Thus, when all of the trays are stacked on the base unit such that the data pins and data receptacles, and the power pins and power receptacles are in contact, the base unit collectively downloads customer responses from all of the stacked trays, and the recharger in the base unit recharges the batteries in all of the stacked trays simultaneously. This stacking arrangement is in direct contrast to the trays in Crooks et al. 5,587,560 which require

separate finite slots 30, 30 on the base 24 such that downloading and charging can only occur by placing one tray into a corresponding slot formed on the base. In contrast, the present invention allows for any number of trays to be charged and downloaded independent of the base capacity to dock with trays other but for the one with which it directly connects. While Liu et al. 2002/0107717 A1 does disclose a system for registering customer evaluations at a POS station, it does so using the credit card reading device which has neither a stackable battery recharge or a stackable download connection. Finally, Eide, 6,014,316 disclose a stacked arrangement of IC chips which conduct data between levels by vertically aligned contacts. Eide 6,014,316 disclose a dstacked arrangement of IC chips which conduct power between levels by verticaaly aligned contacts. However the contacts in Eide are exposed surfaces - not pin/receptacle connections which would allow for a more robust interchangeable connection as in the present invention, do not connect to a battery source associated with each chip and are not removable, external devices such as trays. Finally, Crooks et al., Liu et, al., Eide all fail to disclose or suggest a device which further includes a transmitter connected to an obtaining and storing means selectively generating a signal in response to the obtaining and storing means obtaining a particularly good or bad response by a customer which allows a manager to react to a given problematic or, conversely, an exceptionally well satisfied patron, which feature is clearly tied to effectively responding to a customer satisfaction goal.

References not relied on:

EOP 10059599 - discloses an apparatus for retrieving product specific information and includes populating a database with comments by the customers on particular products the communication to the database is accomplished by a mobile phone rather than a tip tray which is stackable to both download data and recharge.

"Freebies and other kid friendly frills" - discloses obtaining comments from children on improvements to the restaurants, such as children's tables and games to promoter feedback. But this feed back is taken via a person to person, not electronically.

US 5,814,968 - discloses pagers which are recharged when stacked. However, the pagers are not trays with obtaining and storing means for survey responses, nor do they convey data through one another and nor do they transmit a signal based upon the obtaining and storing means obtaining a particularly good or bad response by a customer.

6,310,783 - discloses stacked power supplies but not vertically connected and no data transmitted.

6,380,928 - portable hand held device with commentary feature but has no stacking features for recharging or downloading or signal transmitter for a given circumstance.

5,813,748 - discloses a tip tray but no data collecting means, no stacking, recharging or downloading or transmitting of a signal condition disclosed or suggested.

5,893,075 - messages are sent via mail to potential customers but has no disclosure of a tray with the particulars of claim 8.

5,237,157 - discloses a kiosk with commentary function but no trays disclosed or stacking feature.

5,288,565 - battery pack housing which sandwiches the power element between the housing pieces, not an electronic device.

4,882,675 - electronic coupons system which matches items purchased with future coupons to be used, the coupons are electronic. No trays are disclosed or suggested

5,355,115 - tip book with transmitter only for indicating payment ready status of customer, no stacking to charge or download disclosed or suggested.

6076079 - tip calculator which calculates tips and is compact enough to be clipped to a check folder. No stacking recharge feature is disclosed/suggested by which recharge and down loading occurs or any of the other features of claim 8.

5,859,628 – base for a palm pilot which recharges and downloads the palm pilot but no disclosure is made of stacking plural pilots on top of each other to recharge them from a single base or to download the stack through one another or to provide a transmitter which transmits a signal based upon the obtaining and storing means obtaining a particularly good or bad response by a customer.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to Joseph A. Fischetti at telephone number (703) 305-0731.

**JOSEPH A. FISCHETTI**  
**PRIMARY EXAMINER**

